WATSON’S CARING IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

A GUIDE FOR CARING WHEN INTERACTING, TEACHING, AND LEARNING IN CYBERSPACE

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Watson's Caring in the Digital World
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Dr. Watson’s caring philosophy is used to guide new models of caring and healing practices in diverse settings worldwide. At the University of Colorado, Dr. Watson holds the title of Distinguished Professor of Nursing, the highest honor accorded its faculty for scholarly work.
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Jean Watson’s “Human Caring Theory” asserts that caring and love transcend distance, space, time, and physicality, and it is true. Feelings of love, kinship, friendship, grief, and compassion across time and distance confirm our basic shared experience of caring, regardless of physical and temporal boundaries. The rise of the Internet invites us to examine how deeply we believe in this transcendence, and challenges us to create new ways of caring in this increasingly digital world.

Understanding and explaining caring in the digital world—especially what it looks like, how to do it, and the day-to-day ordinary consistency of living it—is key to supporting an ongoing intention to care whether we can (or ever will) see, touch, or hear the beings with whom we interact. In this increasingly digital world, learning to care and love across distance, space, time, and physicality is critical to preserving the basic fabric of nursing and of humanity as we interact less physically but more electronically. We must all work together to envision and discover caring possibilities in the course of this inevitable change so that caring remains a core value in nursing and beyond.

The purpose of this book is to provide background and practices to support caring in the digital world. Educational activities and professional practice both rely on digital resources to facilitate interaction, collaboration, learning, and connection. Establishing a firm intent to care in digital settings and then enacting caring in ways that have been validated through research and other forms of knowledge development will help sustain caring as a core value in nursing and beyond.
This book has three major sections:

- Part I focuses on Watson’s “Human Caring Theory” and how to generally apply the tenets of the theory in the digital world. The chapters in Part I offer an overview of Caring Science foundations, Caritas Processes, and examples of real-life applications and implementation strategies. Readers are encouraged to read Part I first.

- Part II focuses on specific approaches for teachers, learners, and professionals that have been shown to convey caring in the digital world. The chapters in Part II provide simple yet effective activities that teachers, learners, and professionals can do to support caring in digital learning environments and during everyday digital communications. These chapters can be utilized by readers in whatever order best suits their professional circumstances.

- Part III presents examples of initiatives aimed at establishing ongoing intent to care on the personal, local, national, and global levels. The chapters in Part III explore existing online free and open global educational opportunities related to conveying and sustaining caring in the digital world, and provide simple practices that will support personal and ongoing intent to care.

- Part IV consists of teaching materials for a self-contained course on caring that readers may use to create their own course on caring in professional or academic settings. These course materials also provide a concrete example of how to create clear and well-organized content for online courses.

- “Pearls of Wisdom,” providing easy access to simple insights and activities readers may find especially helpful in understanding and enacting digital world caring, appear throughout the text. Ancillary teaching materials are available at springerpub.com/sitzman-mooc.

Kathleen Sitzman
Overview of Jean Watson’s “Human Caring Theory” With Digital World Applications
In this chapter, you will learn about

- How Caring Science relates to the digital world
- Value assumptions of Caring Science
- Establishing a firm intent to care
Demonstrating, communicating, and teaching caring are all expected components of nursing practice regardless of setting. “Caring” is “when the one caring connects with and embraces the spirit of the other through authentic, full attention in the here and now, and conveys a concern for the inner life and personal meaning of another” (Sitzman & Watson, 2014, p. 17). Within the nursing profession and other caring professions, “there lies a timeless ethic of caring and an honoring of the centrality of caring–healing relationships” (Watson, 1999, p. 21). This enduring caring ethic must be continually considered anew within the context of ongoing societal and technological change.

The rise of the Internet and the advent of continual, real-time, unfettered flow of thoughts, feelings, and information through electronic means have created an opportunity to envision and enact new ways of caring in the digital world. Watson foreshadowed this phenomenon in 1999:

> These [societal] changes fluctuate between intergalactic space explorations and digital world and hyperspace. They move between text and hypertext to hidden text, jumping from “word processing” to “thought processing,” leaping from text to subtext to intertext; from actual to virtual, no longer aware of differences, no longer dealing with logical, linear thought or data. Such quantum leaps in human experience require that we reconsider our very concept of being. (p. xiv)

Watson’s “Human Caring Theory” effectively accommodates these shifts in human experience by providing structure upon which an enduring intent to care can be crafted that will flourish and grow in the flow of ongoing change. Watson’s Caring Science and 10 Caritas Processes help individuals, groups, and systems establish and nourish an intent to consistently care, and to engage in caring practices in any setting or discipline, whether face to face or in the digital world.
BASIC VALUE ASSUMPTIONS OF CARITAS PRACTICE

Watson’s “Human Caring Theory” affirms certain value assumptions about the nature of caring. These assumptions form the philosophical foundation of Caring Science (Watson, 1985/1988, p. 32; Watson, 2008, pp. 41–42):

- If our humanity is to survive and if we are to evolve toward a more loving, caring, deeply human and humane, moral community and civilization, we must sustain love and caring in our life, our work, and our world.

- Nursing being a caring profession, its ability to sustain its caring ideals, ethics, and philosophy for professional practices will affect the human development of civilization and nursing’s mission in society.

- As a beginning, we have to learn how to offer caring, love, forgiveness, compassion, and mercy to ourselves before we can offer authentic caring and love to others.

- We have to treat ourselves with lovingkindness and equanimity, gentleness, and dignity before we can accept, respect, and care for others within a professional caring–healing model.

- Nursing has always held a caring stance with respect to others and their health and illness concerns.

- Knowledgeable, informed, ethical caring is the essence of professional nursing values, commitments, and competent actions; it is the most central and unifying source to sustain its covenant to society and ensure its survival.

- Preservation and advancement of Caring Science values, knowledge, theories, philosophies, ethics, and clinical practices, within a context of Caritas cosmology, are ontological,
Overview of Jean Watson’s “Human Caring Theory”

epistemological, and clinical endeavors; these endeavors are the source of and foundation for sustaining and advancing the discipline and profession.

These assumptions are based on the following assertions:

• Caring and love are what power the universe.
• Caring is the central unifying force in the nursing profession, and in humanity.
• Caring is the primary reason for human existence.
• Self-care is critical in terms of facilitating one’s ability to care for others.

Caritas Consciousness, Transpersonal Caring moments, and the 10 Caritas Processes described in Watson’s “Human Caring Theory” are presented in Chapters 2 to 4 of this text. They provide a framework upon which individuals may build their own unique and sustainable caring presence/Caritas practice in face-to-face and digital world settings.

“Care and love are the most universal, the most tremendous and the most mysterious of cosmic forces: they comprise the primal universal psychic energy” (Watson, 1985/1988, pp. 32–33). This assertion is an invitation to build a personal Caritas practice that fosters constant awareness of the fundamental importance of caring and love in life and work. When making decisions in times of questioning or doubt, this approach acknowledges that love is ultimately the answer to every question. Consistently viewing Watson’s work in light of this elemental understanding nurtures an intuitive feel for cultivating a personal caring comportment in self and others in any setting, whether it is face-to-face or in the digital world. Caring Science is concerned with human caring as it is expressed, explored, and experienced across a broad range of human occurrences. People are unified on infinite levels, with gross and subtle influences flowing
in, around, and through all layers of existence. These influences emanate from individuals, to others, to community, to world, to planet Earth, to the universe, and beyond. Awareness of interconnectedness is a key component in caring interactions and activities.

Watson’s “Human Caring Theory” is a philosophical and moral/ethical foundation for nursing that places a central focus on intentional caring at the disciplinary level. This model of caring includes art, science, humanities, spirituality, and continually evolving facets of mind-body-spirit medicine. Watson’s “Human Caring Theory” is a guide meant to support day-to-day enactment of intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional caring for self and others through the establishment of a firm and consistent intent to care.

Pearls of Wisdom

Establishing and then consciously maintaining a firm intent to care is key to the process of manifesting a unique and enduring caring identity.

Watson’s “Human Caring Theory” provides a theoretical foundation that supports discovery and knowledge in relation to dimensions of caring.

REFLECTIONS FROM JEAN WATSON: CARITAS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD: CYBERCARING

In the 1980s, I heard Martha Rogers suggest that in the future, *Homo sapiens* would morph into *Homo spaciens*—recognizing that
humans and technology are constantly comingling, evolving, and metamorphosing, transfiguring self and society.

At this point in human history, we are awakening to a reality that each person on planet Earth is part of a vast invisible veil and web with all of humanity and the environment. These advanced innovations are nonlinear, quantum jumps toward activation of social and human potentials—a universal humanity. Further, we are faced with a quantum leap in human consciousness, from physical to nonphysical, from matter to spirit.

Although we humans have learned, and continue to learn, how to evolve consciously with science and technology, we are challenged from within and without for survival of our basic humanity.

With these new human–technological challenges, we are called to apply values and practices of human caring and compassion to sustain our humanity and guide human consciousness evolution. Or we witness what Levinas noted: the totalizing and destruction of humanity (Levinas, 1969) and Mother Earth (Levinas, 1969).

As part of this evolution of technology and consciousness, we are entering a new worldview vital to ethical evolution and education, to guide us into the future.

Philosophies, ethics, and values of Human Caring Theory in education and practice can provide a guide for this new nonlocal consciousness and this new world, beyond the physical plane. Notions of transpersonal human caring (Watson, 1985/1988) can be used as a pedagogy–androgyne in the virtual world of education. Caring Consciousness radiating into the digital world has the potential to contribute to a moral community of human caring that honors, evolves, and expands the web of life.

Caring in the digital world—CyberCaring—unveils dynamics and relationships between transpersonal caring and advanced technologies, which point a way forward for global nursing education. By learning to combine a “one-world,” “universal humanity” awakening with a shared global caring consciousness, we become part of quantum transformations contributing to the evolution of the human spirit and spirituality—thus, the evolved human.
REFERENCES


